



ST. JOSEPH

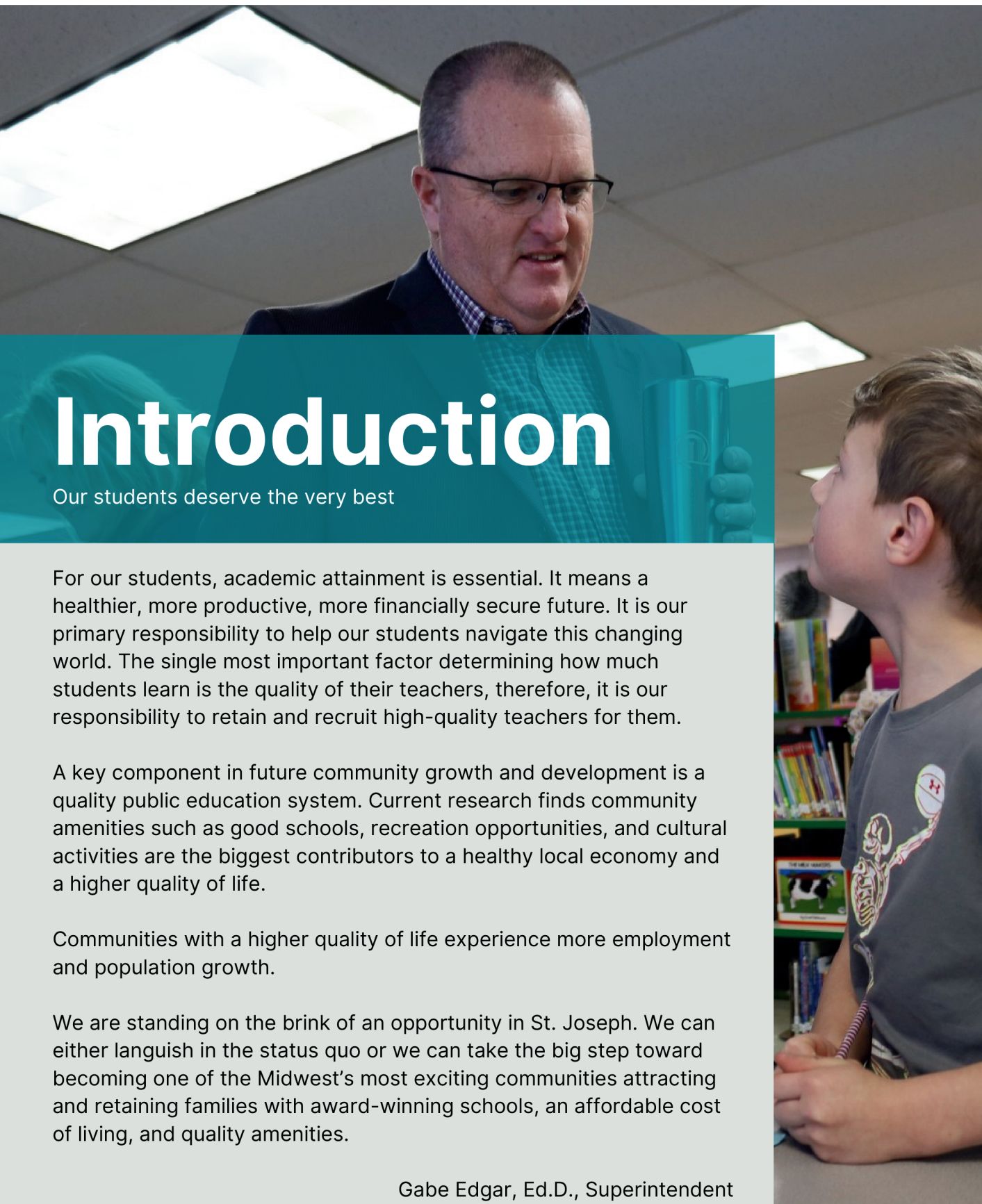
SCHOOL DISTRICT

DRAFT V12

2024-2029

Long-Range Plan

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# Introduction

Our students deserve the very best

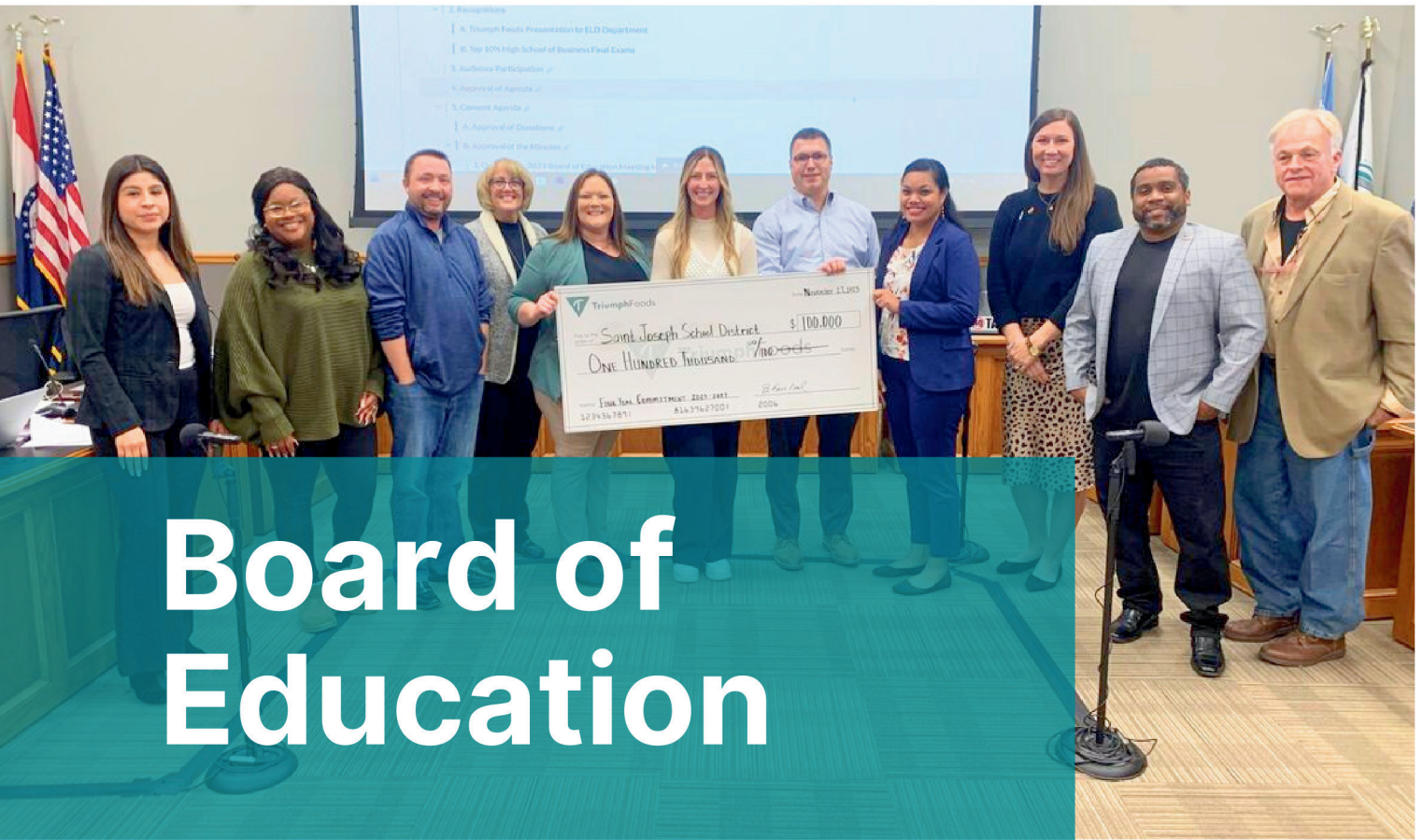
For our students, academic attainment is essential. It means a healthier, more productive, more financially secure future. It is our primary responsibility to help our students navigate this changing world. The single most important factor determining how much students learn is the quality of their teachers, therefore, it is our responsibility to retain and recruit high-quality teachers for them.

A key component in future community growth and development is a quality public education system. Current research finds community amenities such as good schools, recreation opportunities, and cultural activities are the biggest contributors to a healthy local economy and a higher quality of life.

Communities with a higher quality of life experience more employment and population growth.

We are standing on the brink of an opportunity in St. Joseph. We can either languish in the status quo or we can take the big step toward becoming one of the Midwest's most exciting communities attracting and retaining families with award-winning schools, an affordable cost of living, and quality amenities.

Gabe Edgar, Ed.D., Superintendent  
2024



# Board of Education

BOARD PRESIDENT  
LaTonya Williams

BOARD VICE PRESIDENT  
Kenneth Reeder

MEMBERS  
David Foster  
Isaura Garcia  
Rick Gehring  
Whitney Lanning  
Kim Miller

**Students  
10,509**

**Exceptional  
Learners**

11.93% Special Education  
9.59% English Language Development  
1.94% Gifted

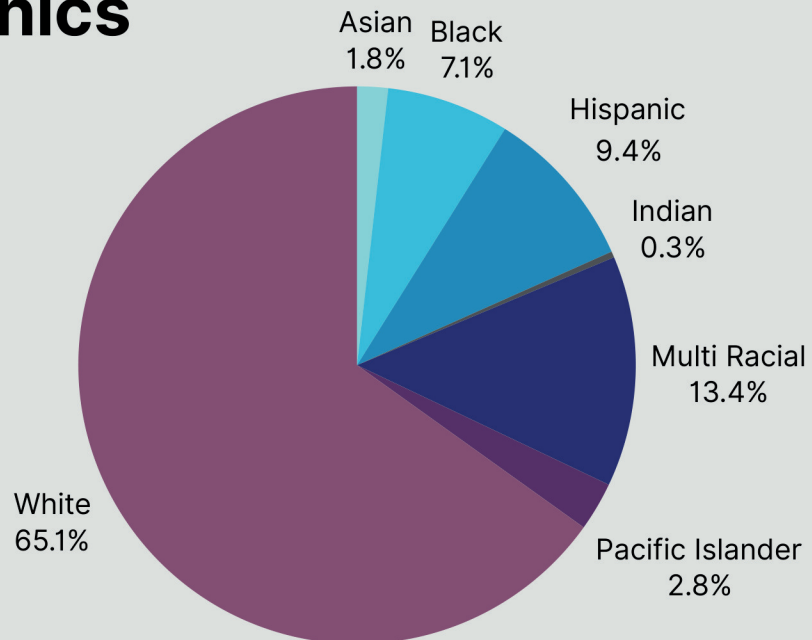


**Lunch Status**

Free and reduced lunch percentages reflect the relative poverty within a school district.  
State average = 47.4%

**73.4%**

**Demographics**



# Mission

Preparing students for success in a complex and changing world.

# Vision

Creating a climate of achievement in partnership with an engaged community.



# Objectives

01

Retaining and hiring high-quality staff

02

Improving student performance

03

Supporting facilities for learning

# Community Input



*The community contributed to this plan by providing input through a series of Vision Forward workshops. "Vision Forward was the result of a sincere desire to improve the educational opportunities for our children." Participants offered solutions on academics, district programs, and challenges facing the St. Joseph School District. You may read more about this community engagement effort and its findings at <https://www.sjsd.k12.mo.us/our-district/community/vision-forward>.*

## Vision Forward Priority Statements

Session #1 – "State of the District – An Overview of the St. Joseph School District" – Jan. 26, 2022  
Work toward enhanced pride and improved community commitment to the importance of public education.

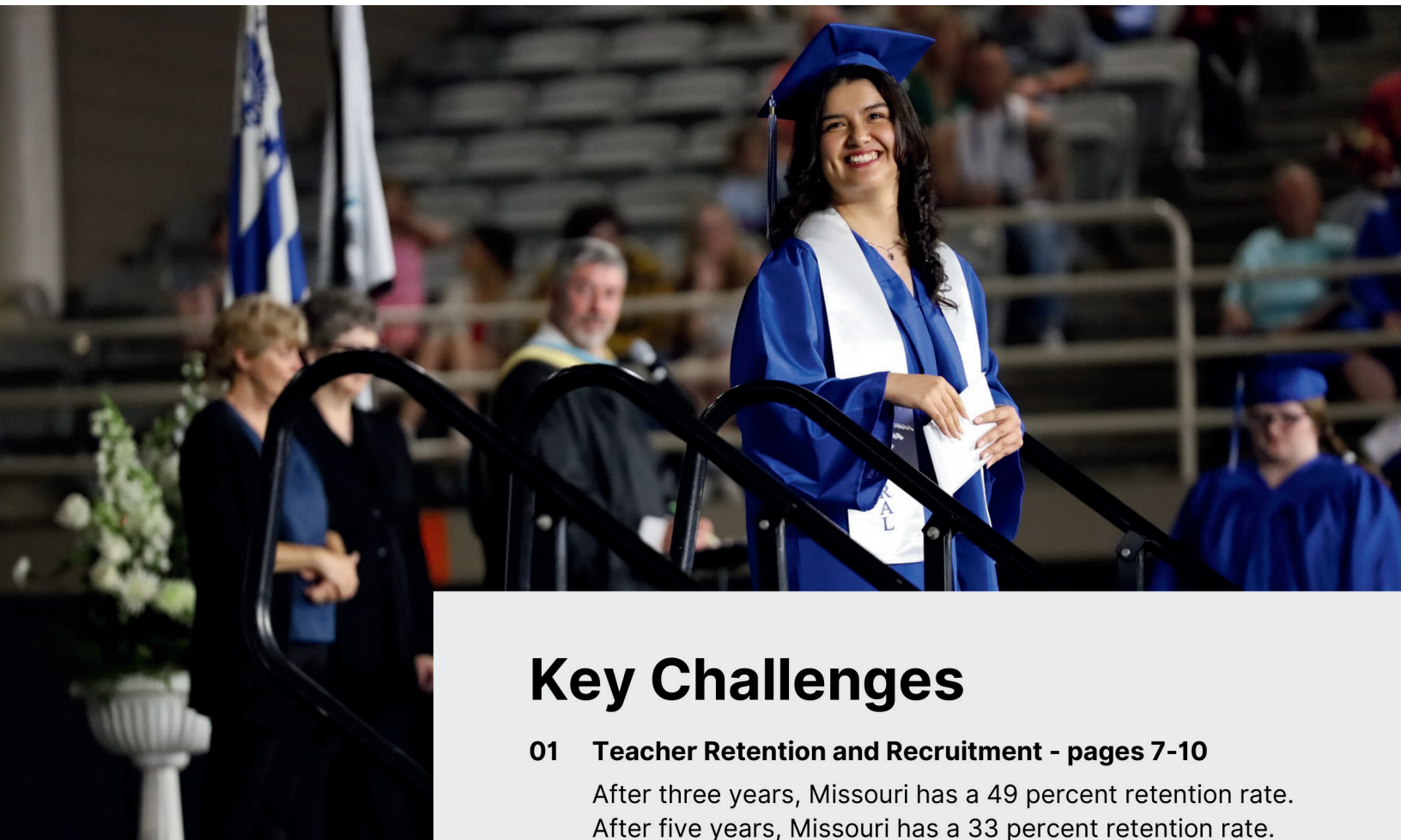
Session #2 – "What Matters Most – High Quality Staff in Every Classroom" – Feb. 22, 2022  
Improve staff recruitment and retention including additional staff support and payment of competitive salaries.

Session #3 – "Improving Student Performance – PreK-Grade 5" – March 29, 2022  
Expand the availability of quality early childhood education programs citywide.

Session #4 – "Improving Student Performance 6-12" – April 26, 2022  
Provide a consistent middle school/junior high model both in configuration and curriculum to improve academic achievement.

Session #4 – "Improving Student Performance 6-12" – April 26, 2022  
Address discipline and low attendance challenges.

Session #5 – "Facilities for Learning" – May 17, 2022  
Consolidate, right-size and make more equitable and functional facilities at all levels (elementary, middle school and high school) so that curricula and programs are equivalent, and buildings operate at optimum efficiency.



## Key Challenges

### 01 Teacher Retention and Recruitment - pages 7-10

After three years, Missouri has a 49 percent retention rate. After five years, Missouri has a 33 percent retention rate. Missouri has the lowest starting salary for teachers in the country.

### 02 Student Performance - pages 11-20

Educational attainment in Buchanan County is below average in the State of Missouri. Just over half of residents have some college or a certificate or degree beyond high school. The state goal is 60 percent. In the State of Missouri, 1.8 percent of students drop out of high school, in Buchanan County, 3.4 percent. Only 42 percent of students are Kindergarten ready.

### 03 Facilities - pages 21-28

The community has wrestled with the concept of building new schools for decades. Our inability to move forward has left us behind competing school districts. The majority of our buildings are over 60 years of age and no longer meet modern educational requirements. With declining enrollments, it is necessary to move from a three to two high school system, redraw boundaries, and reconfigure middle schools.

# Strategies

## Retention and Recruitment

The single most important factor determining how much students learn is quality teachers. Teachers are the lynchpin of high-quality public education. Strengthening the teacher workforce can lay the foundation for solid investments in other areas of public education, such as student educational attainment. Teacher salaries and benefits are by far the largest education expenditure, but they are also the most critical resource for student learning.

### BOARD RETENTION/RECRUITMENT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

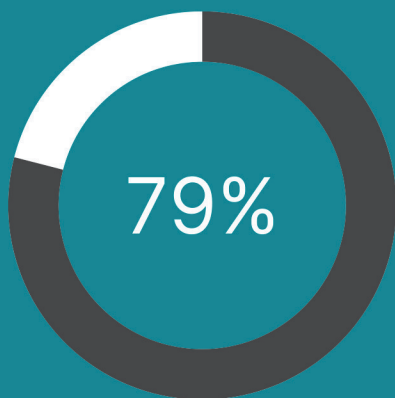
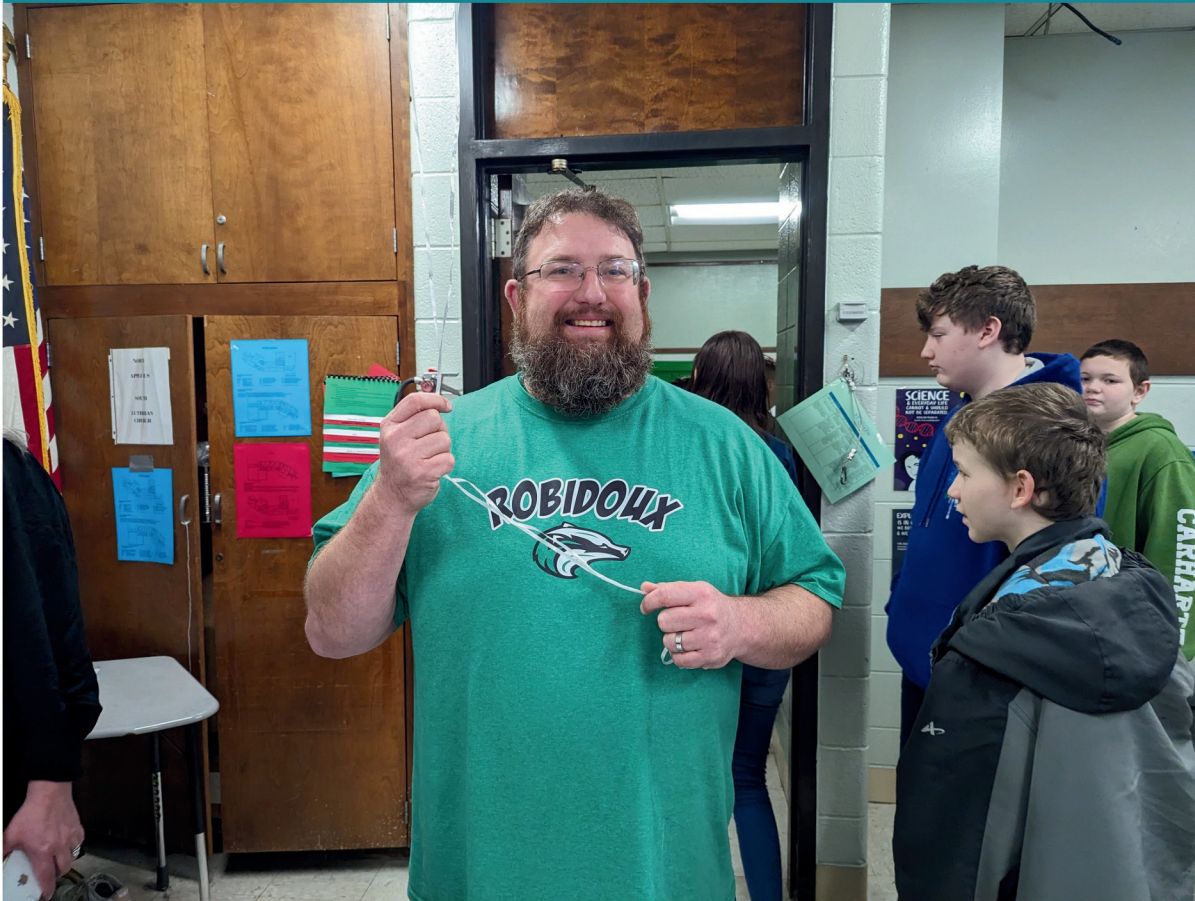
1. Increase the salary schedule
2. Increase Grow Your Own program
3. Increase annual leave buyback
4. Increase the number of full-time building substitutes
5. Increase substitute pay

### STAFF SALARY COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

1. Increase the salary schedule
2. Increase annual leave buyback
3. Increase Grow Your Own program
4. Increase Pathways to Teaching
5. Increase the number of full-time building substitutes



# Strategies Retention and Recruitment



Participants in the 2023 Community Survey say they support additional investments to address staffing needs.

One year investment = \$2.5 million

# Strategies

## Retention and Recruitment

### **Increase the salary schedule**

Our base teacher salary is among the lowest in the area. The Board and Staff Committee both listed increasing salaries as the top priority.

### **Increase Grow Your Own program**

Students who demonstrate an aptitude and interest in teaching may receive tuition for up to eight semesters. In return, they agree to work for the district for at least one year for every year they receive funding.

### **Increase Annual Leave Buyback**

The district would buyback unused leave from the school year from those employees who have 60-109 hours.

### **Increase the number of full-time building substitutes**

Job satisfaction is a key to retention. Increasing full-time substitutes will allow staff take off time when needed, because it ensures qualified staff will provide a smooth transition and quality student instruction.

### **Increase Pathways to Teaching**

Community members and staff who have a bachelor's in an area other than teaching, but want to become teachers, would be offered a position with an alternative certificate. Once accepted into the program, they would be eligible for a provisional certificate and would receive a tuition stipend for up to four semesters to obtain a Missouri Teaching Credential. They would teach for the district for one additional year for every year they received the tuition stipend.

### **Increase substitute pay**

Substitutes play a vital role in quality student instruction, those who substitute should be compensated at an appropriate level.

### **Four-day school week**

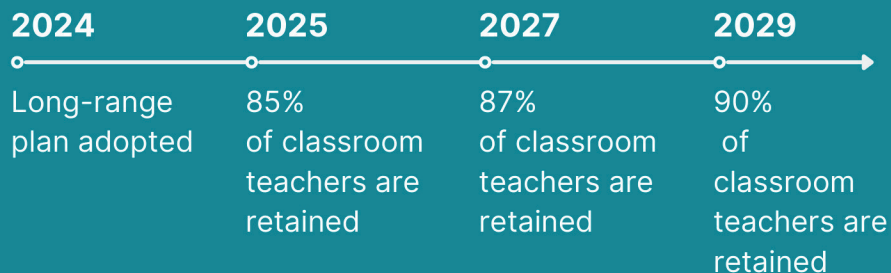
This serves as a teacher recruitment and retention which has the potential to be transformational.

# Retaining High-Quality Teachers

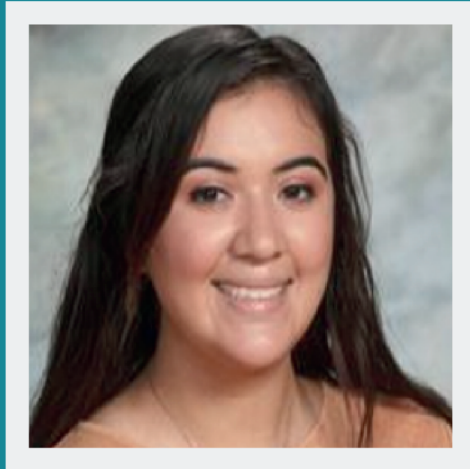
“For a student to learn from you, they have to trust you.”

What makes a great teacher? Two-time Teacher of the Year, Douglas Snider knows that building strong relationships with his students is the key.

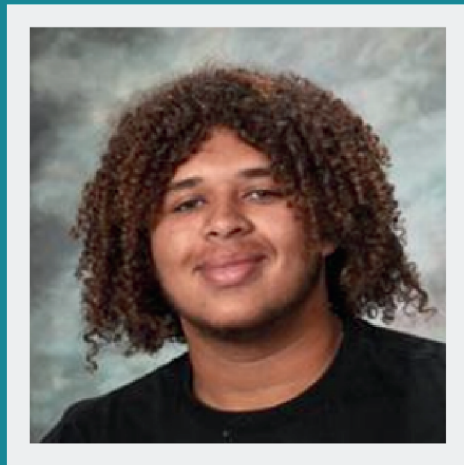
Whether it's trying to connect with his Latino students by learning Spanish or simply providing a kind word and a smile when he greets each kid entering his classroom, Mr. Snider knows the job isn't just teaching American History - it's helping his students make history of their own.



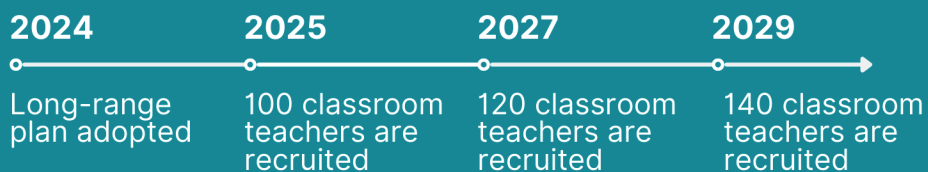
# Retaining High-Quality Teachers



Marianna Sanchez is a graduate of Benton High School and currently a Missouri Western State University graduate student. Through the Grow Our Own initiative she will return to SJSD to be an Elementary Ed/TESOL teacher.



Quentin Garrett is a graduate of Lafayette High School and currently a Missouri Western State University student. Through the Grow Your Own initiative he will return to SJSD to be a Special Education teacher.





## Improve Student Performance

The role of public education was once relatively straightforward, “to teach reading, writing, arithmetic and what it means to be an American citizen.” Today, the St. Joseph School District mission is to “Prepare Students for Success in a Complex and Changing World.”

## Strategies

- Implement Academic Services Improvement Plan
- Implement the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP)
  - Equity & Academics
  - Culture Systems
  - Leadership



## Bright Spots

While it's clear SJSD has key challenges, there are also academic bright spots.



High School English 2 is the most competitive areas for the SJSD when considering comparisons.



High School Algebra 2 and Grade 7 are the most competitive area for the SJSD when considering comparisons.



Grade 3 at 30.6% proficiency was competitive or greater than all but three school districts. Grade 3 at 33.6% proficiency was competitive or greater than all but three school districts.

# More Bright Spots



SJSD 2023 Composite ACT of 20.40 is higher than Missouri's Composite ACT score of 20.1, Independence's Composite ACT score of 19.6 and North Kansas City's Composite ACT score of 19.6.



SJSD Placement Rates for Career-Technical Education Students had improved from 88.7% in 2021 to 92.2% in 2023. (SJSD student that are trained in the district for career-technical jobs have a 92.2% placement rate which is 3.5% than two years ago)



SJSD preschool enrollment has increased by 152 students since 2021.



# Improve Student Performance

## Annual Performance Report (APR)

### Academic Services



1

Increase academic achievement status and growth on state ELA, science, math, and social studies assessments to an “on track” designation.

Action Steps:

- Expansion of early learning opportunities (expand Mark Twain Early Learning Center)
- Implementation of the SJSD lesson plan framework and classroom “look-fors”
- Instructional Coaches

2

District attendance will improve to above 80%.

Action Steps:

- Revise attendance policy
- Monthly collaboration with the Juvenile Office and Prosecuting Attorney
- Family engagement

# Improve Student Performance

## Annual Performance Report (APR)

### Academic Services

3

Success-ready students will improve from “approaching” to “on track” designation

Action Steps:

- All students (except for MAP-A qualifying students) will participate in one of the following CCR assessments: WorkKeys, ACT, or AsVab
- All students grades 8-12 will have an Individual Learning Pathway
- Expansion of Hillyard Technical Center
- Graduate follow-up will improve from “on track” to a “met” designation

4

Graduation rate will improve from 77.6% to above 80%

Action Steps:

- Revise attendance policy
- Establish and maintain community partnerships to provide relevant and unique educational pathways

5

Create and maintain a positive climate and culture as evidenced by a Gallup Poll Q12 score above the industry standard of 34%.

Action Steps:

- Create and implement a positive climate and culture building plan
- Implement social emotional learning

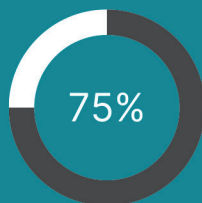
# Improve Student Performance

## The Dream

- Individual Learning Pathway for every student
  - Hillyard Technical School
  - ELD Newcomer Center
  - Gifted Center
- Competency Based Learning



An individual learning path is a personalized learning and development trajectory based on an individual's strategy for achieving long-term personal goals. When developing an educational route, one should consider long-term trends and dynamics in the labor market, learning methods, intellectual, physical, and ethical level, interests and aptitudes of an individual.



Participants in the 2023 Community Survey say they support additional investments to address curriculum needs.

# ELD Newcomer Center

An English Language Development (ELD) Newcomer Center is a specialized educational facility designed to support students who are new to the English language and may have recently immigrated to a country where English is the primary language of instruction. The SJSJSD ELD Newcomer center will provide targeted instruction and support services to help students acquire English language proficiency while also ensuring they have access to the core curriculum. Common features of the center will include English language instruction, cultural orientation, academic support, transition services, and parent and community engagement.

# Gifted and Talented Innovation Center

The St. Joseph School District Gifted and Talented Innovation Center is an educational facility that is designed to provide a learning lab that maximizes the potential of gifted students with unique cognitive, social, and emotional needs through highly challenging curriculum and specialized instruction that enable students to contribute to the demands of an ever-changing society.





# Improve Student Performance CSIP

## Equity & Academics

- Deploy a consistent Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) structure to ensure consistent intervention practices for K-12 reading and math
- Undergo SJSD equity audit
- Review educational practices regarding culturally responsive approaches
- Re-evaluate the Academic Outreach and Innovation (AOI) and collect focused qualitative data on belonging

Create an environment where all members of the SJSD community are empowered agents of change

## Culture and Systems

- Deploy consistent MTSS system to ensure consistent intervention in practices for K-12 reading and math
- Explore a system-wide discipline model focused on restorative practices to reduce outcome gaps
- Consider comprehensive staff and student well-being plan
- Participate in DESE collaborative process for SEL curriculum
- Undergo SJSD equity audit
- Develop a community-wide survey, conduct focus groups, and develop a plan to improve community engagement

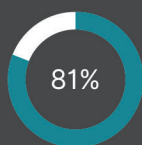
Visionary staff daring students to think today and lead tomorrow

## Leadership

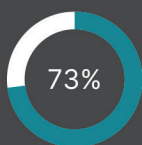
- Increase and retain the percentage of highly-qualified staff
- Undergo SJSD audit
- Develop a long-range facilities plan
- Improve the budgetary process through horizon and strategic challenges to address environmental shifts, under-utilized and aging structures.

Measures: Success Ready Index, Social & Emotional Index, Access & Opportunity Index, Balanced Scorecard

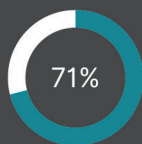
# Why is academic attainment important?



Fosters greater innovation in terms of new scientific, medical and technological discoveries



Leads to higher household incomes



Results in a more knowledgeable population

Source: Lumina Foundation Gallup Survey, November 2022.

# Big Goals for Missouri Educational Attainment



The State of Missouri has set an educational attainment goal of 60% of all adults in Missouri attaining a certificate or degree beyond high school. Currently the percentage is 50.5.



Matthew Kelly  
Central High School Senior  
Hillyard Apprentice, Altec.

## **NWMO REGIONAL YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM**

A program of the St. Joseph School District & Hillyard Technical Center, with leadership from the St. Joseph Chamber of Commerce

An apprenticeship is an effective way to gain the necessary training to enter the workforce making a livable wage with ample opportunity for advancement. Registered youth apprenticeship combines related technical instruction and on-the-job training scheduled with the partnering employer. This work-based learning experience gives students the opportunity to gain the technical and employability skills necessary to be successful post-graduation.

# Improving Facilities



**2024**

Ask voters to approve a no tax increase bond issue to support long-range plan.

**2025**

Ask voters to approve a bond issue to build one new high school.

**2026**

Begin building a new high school or close one building and remodel two. Redraw boundaries, reconfigure middle schools, create a feeder pattern.

**2029**

Ask voters to approve building a second new high school or continue to use two existing buildings.

# 2024



## Q1

Ask the Board of Education to approve a \$20 million no tax bond issue plan.

Begin education and communication on \$20 million no tax on the bond projects.

Ask the Board of Education to approve a boundary-relief plan for Lindbergh Elementary. Move students to other schools to address enrollment disparity.

## Q2

Ask voters to approve a \$20 million no tax increase bond issue to support the long-range plan and improve facilities.

- Public Safety
- Academics
- Athletics

If approved  
Q3 & Q4 implement voter-approved capital upgrades.

# 2024



## Education

- Improve science & technology programs, **\$1 million**
- Upgrade fine arts programs, **\$3.2 million**

## Facilities

- Install district-wide intercom system, **\$2 million**
- Enhance HVAC system efficiency, **\$2.3 million**
- Expand learning environment space, **\$3 million**

## Grounds

- Construct new roadways for accessibility, **\$1 million**
- Replace broken sidewalks, **\$1 million**
- Install turf fields and replace aging tracks, **\$6.5 million**



2025



## The Objective

Build two new high schools, one located in the south part of the community and the other in the north. Approval of these new schools will set a plan in motion to align boundaries, reconfigure the middle school model, and right-size elementary schools.



## April 2025 Election

Ask voters to approve a bond issue to build one new high school.



## If Approved

Begin building process. Align boundaries, reconfigure middle schools to a 6-8 model, and right-size elementary schools.



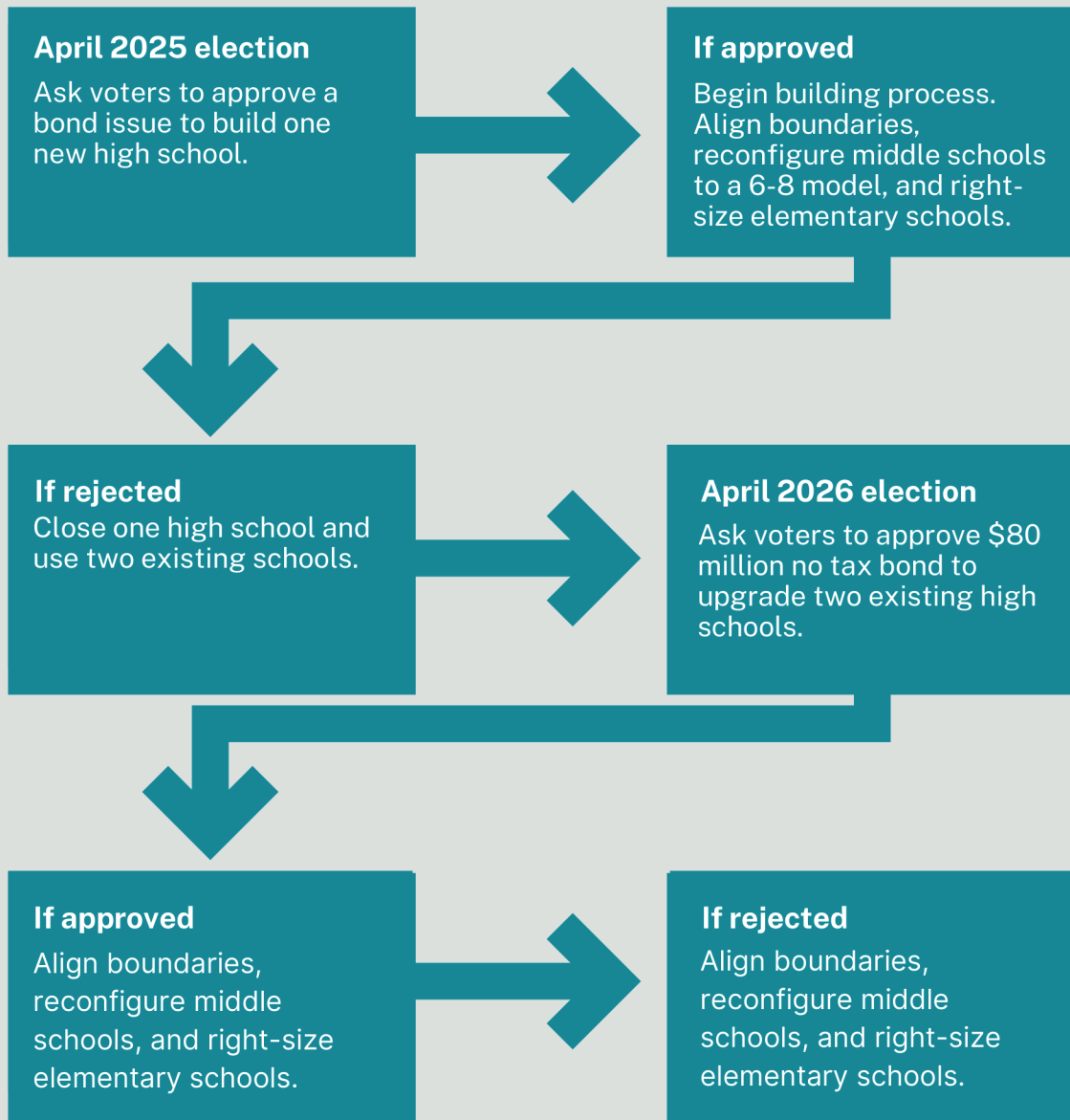
## If Rejected

Close one high school, align boundaries, reconfigure middle school, and right-size elementary schools.

# 2025

## The Objective

To become a two high school community, with an aligned feeder system, calling for a reconfiguration of middle schools and right-sizing elementary schools.





## The Case for Two High Schools

**Current high school enrollment: 2,887**  
**Optimum capacity: 3,996**  
**Empty seats: 1,109**

- Central - Current enrollment 1,614 (*capacity 1,732*)
- Benton - Current enrollment 612 (*capacity 884*)
- Lafayette - Current enrollment 661 (*capacity 1,300*)
- Hillyard Technical School - Capacity 150
- ELD Newcomer Academy - Capacity 250

- 
- New schools help foster an innovative learning environment for students and create new opportunities;
  - New schools provide academic access and opportunity to curriculum for all students;
  - New schools help retain and recruit high-quality staff as it is a clear signal the community values public education;
  - New schools make for a better workplace for teachers and staff;
  - Right-sizing the district makes financial sense and is fiscally responsible;
  - Repurpose schools no longer needed for students to much-needed housing.



# Future Schools Desired State

**NORTH HIGH SCHOOL**  
1,500+ students

**SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL**  
1,500+ students

**Lafayette Middle School (6-8)**  
1,200 students

**Benton/Hyde Middle School (6-8)**  
1,200 students

**Elementary Schools 420+ students**

- Coleman Elementary
- Edison Elementary
- Lindbergh Elementary
- Oak Grove Elementary
- Robidoux Elementary

**Elementary Schools 420+ students**

- Carden Park Elementary
- Hosea Elementary
- Parkway Elementary
- Skaith Elementary
- Spring Garden Elementary

**EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**  
Mark Twain/Truman

**ALTERNATE EDUCATION CENTER**  
Open site

**HILLYARD TECHNICAL SCHOOL**  
Same

**CENTRAL FACILITY**  
Open site

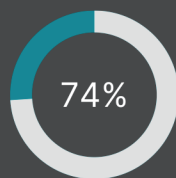
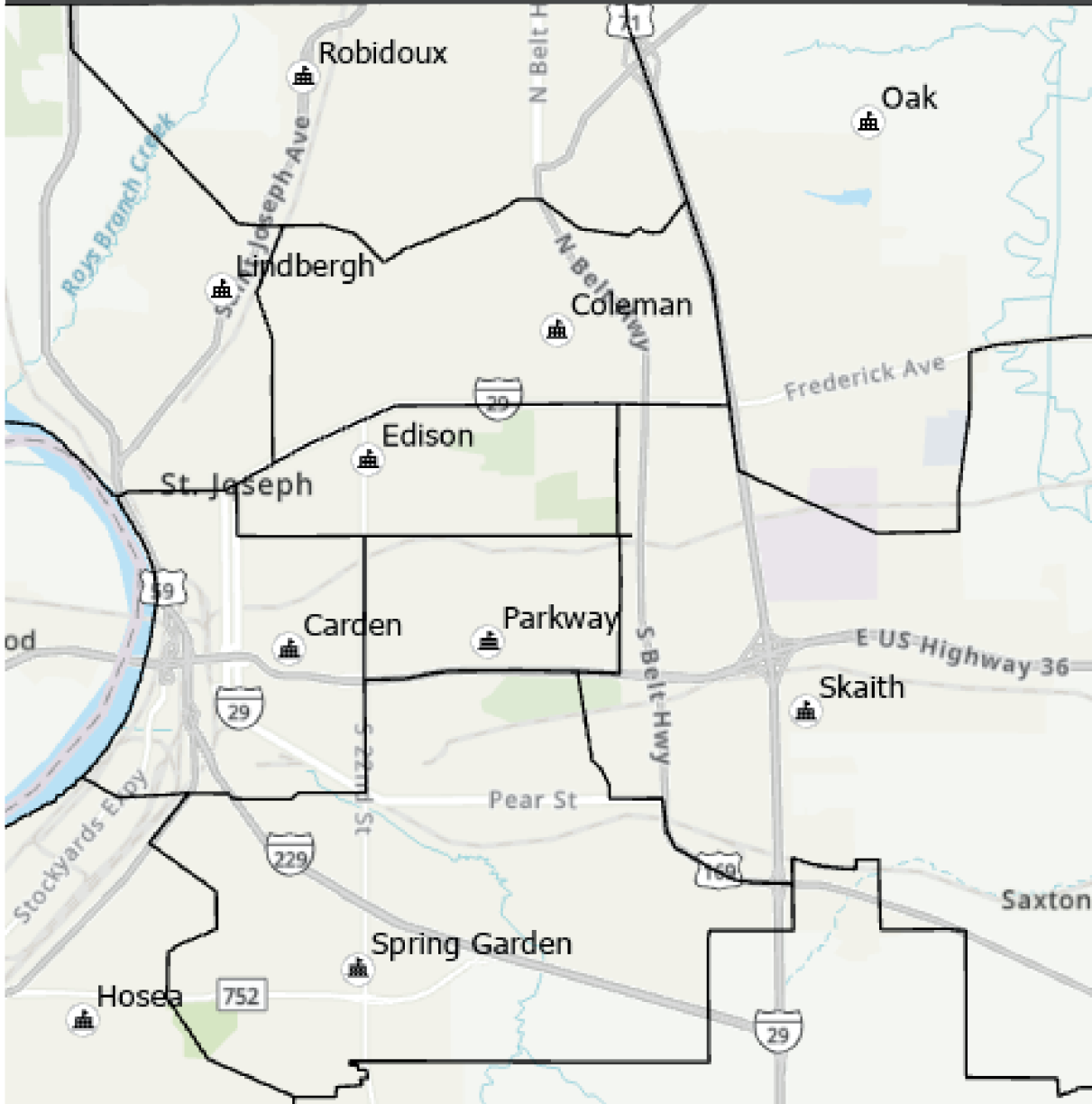
**ELD NEWCOMER CENTER**  
Open site

**OPEN SITES**  
Bode, Field, Ellison, Pickett, Pershing,  
Webster

**GIFTED INNOVATION CENTER**  
Open site

Repurpose Housing

# Future Schools Desired State Elementary Boundaries



Participants in the 2023 Community Survey say they support additional investments to address facility needs.